Hungarian Literature Series

Vasco Kunyoshi

Edited by William Morrill

YOUNGER ARTISTS SERIES

NUMBER 4

YASUO KUNIYOSHI

Those interested in the raison d'être of this monograph will find in the first number of the series to which it belongs a »General Introduction« by Mr. Harold Ward. With as much brevity as is consistent with definiteness, this Introduction seeks to formulate the intellectual position of the editor, and to outline the critical background against which he has placed the various figures dealt with in »The Younger Artists Series«.

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YOUNGER ARTISTS SERIES
NUMBER 4

YASUO KUNIYOSHI

BY

WILLIAM MURRELL

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR AND
21 REPRODUCTIONS IN BLACK AND WHITE

WOODSTOCK, N. Y. 1922
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YOUNGER ARTISTS SERIES

Already Published

Nr. 1 Ernest Fiene
Nr. 2 Alexander Brook
Nr. 3 Peggy Bacon
Nr. 4 Yasuo Kuniyoshi

In Preparation

Nr. 5 Henry Lee Mac Fee
Nr. 6 Ben Benn
Nr. 7 Edward Fisk
Nr. 8 Henry Mattson

YASUO KUNIYOSHI

The invisible chasm between the Japanese and the Western mind has been tentatively bridged for us in various ways. By appreciations of ancient Japanese art, by translations of poetry and drama; by the transposing of the Japanese sense of rhythm by Whistler, and of the life atmosphere by Lafcadio Hearn.

The Japanese, on their side, have made spectacular progress in their assimilation and imitation of Western civilization. Especially is this true with regard to all modern mechanical and scientific discoveries.

In art, of course many Japanese students have taken up Western methods of painting, and are proudly proficient in technique. The to them fascination and novelty of naturalistic representation

is readily understandable, but it is also clear to any observer that our objective technique is, at bottom, not an authentic medium for the Oriental psyche — which is essentially subjective in quality, expressing itself best in symbols and conventionalized forms.

It is, however, undeniable that the Japanese mind has become more objective, and that all aesthetically minded Westerns are on the whole, subjective. So that here on artistic soil, it would appear, is common ground. Yet it is only apparently so, for whereas the more subjective Occidentals interest themselves in visualizations of their emotions, the more objective Japanese plunge headlong into what is miscalled realistic art.

It is therefore all the more remarkable to find one or two Japanese who have not swallowed Western technique whole, but who have deliberately broken off and digested only what their individual artistic diathesis could absorb.

Yasuo Kuniyoshi is perhaps the only Japanese now painting in America whose work is free from both Oriental and Occidental academic influences as such; the single instance of a selective blending of dynamic elements from two great traditions into a style distinctly original. This is

saying much, but not too much. No one, glancing through this little book of reproductions, can fail to note the excellence and charm of design, the perfection of expressive detail, and the extraordinarily ingenuous humor.

Kuniyoshi came to America when he was fourteen years old, and he is now twenty-eight. It is significant that he had no artistic training in Japan, but studied in Los Angelos and in New York at irregular intervals. All that is Japanese in his work is therefore innate and authentic; and that which is American comes less from the art schools than from the life about him. Yet he is unquestionably an American painter, less by reason of his technical training or subject matter than by reason of his free exercise of a creative personal aesthetic as opposed to the conventional traditions of his race.

Kuniyoshi's first exhibition, held at the Daniel Gallery in New York in January 1922, was pleasantly though quietly received. Most of the canvases reproduced here were then exhibited. As a painter Kuniyoshi ignores the current effort for solidity of form. He calmly brushes in thin harmonious color over the surfaces of his designs, and depends largely upon the humor and quality

of the latter to sustain his work. But there are many passages of quite distinguished color in his painting, which are to be felt only after the amused surprise at the designs is past.

YASUO KUNIYOSHI
REPRODUCTIONS

Frontispiece in Color

Paintings:

1. Boy Frightened by Snake
2. Wild Horses
3. Boy Fishing
4. Village
5. Good Little Girl
6. From Pine Hill
7. The Poultry Yard
8. Girl at the Piano
9. Young Couple
10. Maude
11. Sisters
12. The Flapper
13. Milking

Drawings:

14. Boy Frightened by Lightening
15. Landscape
16. Still-life
17. Baby with Toy Cow
18. Egg-plant
19. Country Road
20. Fruit
21. Milking

BOY FRIGHTENED BY SNAKE Oil 1921

WILD HORSES Oil 1920

BOY FISHING Oil 1921

VILLAGE Oil 1921

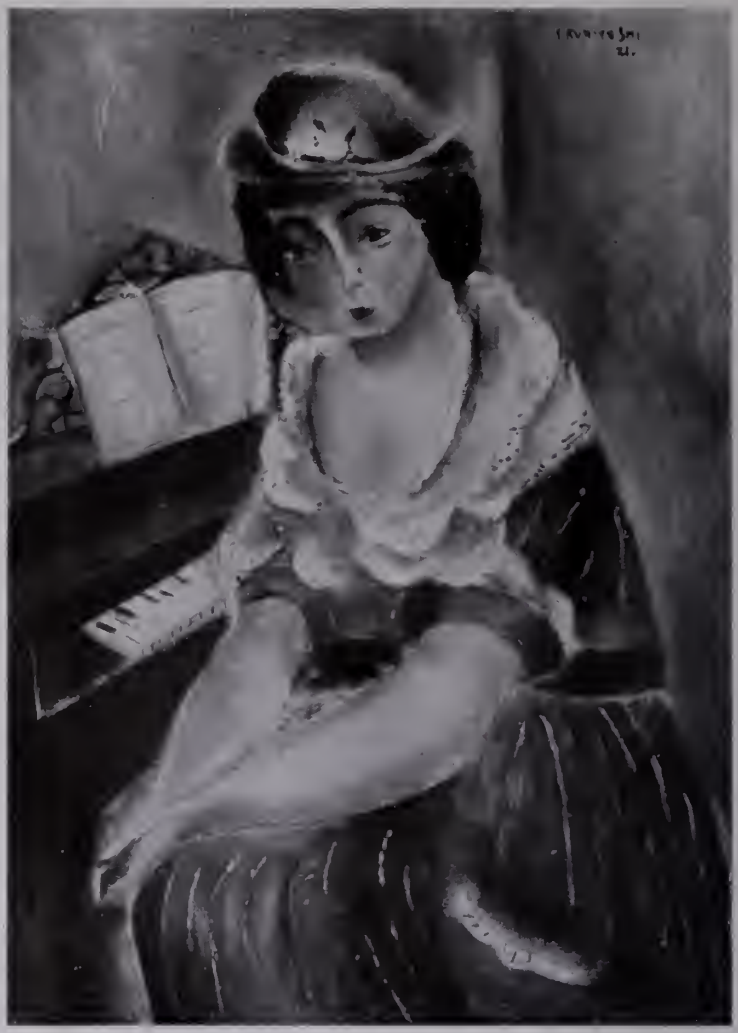
(Owned by Mrs. G. R. Dick)

GOOD LITTLE GIRL Oil 1921

FROM PINE HILL

Oil, 1920

THE POULTRY YARD Oil 1921



GIRL AT THE PIANO Oil 1921

YOUNG COUPLE Oil 1921

MAUD Oil 1921

SISTERS Oil 1920

THE FLAPPER Oil 1921

MILKING Oil 1921

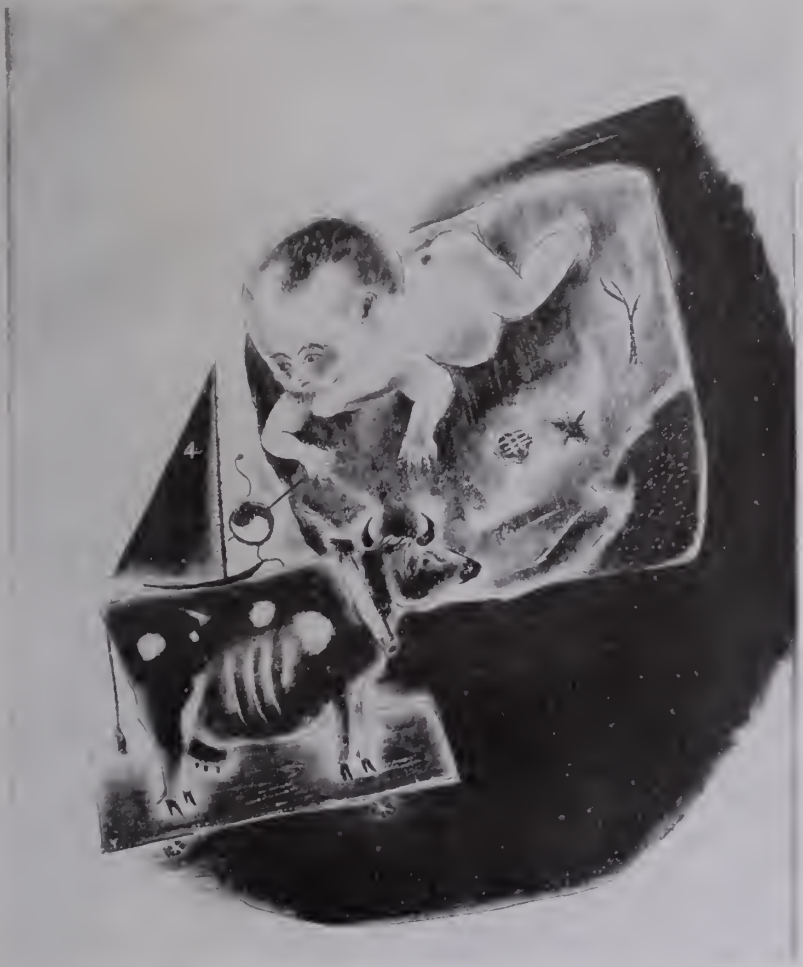
BOY FRIGHTENED BY LIGHTENING — Ink Drawing 1921

(Owned by Mrs. C. Blacon)

LANDSCAPE

Ink Drawing .920

STILL-LIFE Ink Drawing 1921



BABY WITH TOY COW — Ink Drawing 1921

EGG-PLANT Ink Drawing 1921

COUNTRY ROAD Ink Drawing 1921

FRUIT

Ink Drawing 1921

MILKING Ink Drawing 1921